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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 001657

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TAGS: PREL MARR PTER OVIP PACE PETER TU IZ IR SY

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SUBJECT: CJCS AND CHOD OZKOK STRESS IMPORTANCE OF
U.S.-TURKEY MILITARY COOPERATION

REF: A. ANKARA 1656

1B. ANKARA 1623

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: CJCS Gen Pace and TGS Chief Ozkok reaffirmed the importance of the US-Turkey military relationship. Ozkok underscored Turkey's record of cooperation on Iraq, acknowledged recent progress there, stressed the importance of Kirkuk, and warned that sectarian strife could draw neighbors into Iraq. He expressed appreciation for US efforts against the PKK in Europe and through intelligence sharing, but called for some action to keep the PKK in northern Iraq from becoming too comfortable, such as strong statements by senior officials against the terrorist group. Gen Pace responded that it was important to get Iraq right first, then Turkey, Iraq and the US could together deal with the PKK presence. Meanwhile, he offered to think about what might be done to keep the PKK "on edge." Regarding Iran and Syria, Ozkok suggested that engagement would be more effective than isolation. Ozkok complained about Greeks' intercepting Turkish Air Force flights in the Aegean. Gen Pace raised American defense companies' recent difficulties in the Turkish market, noting how militaries possessing the same equipment work more closely together. Ozkok offered a spirited defense of offsets and Turkey's demands for technology transfer. Both generals agreed to look for ways to expand bilateral training opportunities. End Summary.

12. (C) CJCS Gen Pace met with Chief of the Turkish General Staff GEN Hilmi Ozkok for 1.25 hours on March 23. Ozkok thanked the Chairman for supporting Turkey's Center of Excellence-Defense Against Terrorism (Gen Pace spoke at a COE-DAT-sponsored counterterrorism conference the next day). He observed that Turkey was in a crucial area of importance to the US. While important during the Cold War, US-Turkey relations were even more important today, he declared. CJCS agreed, calling the relationship "absolutely critical."

Iraq

13. (S) Ozkok argued that Turkish cooperation on Iraq contributed greatly to CF efforts there, including hosting several northern no-fly zone operations after 1991, opening

Turkish airspace, even after the March 1, 2003 Parliamentary vote prohibiting US troops to transit Turkey, and permitting special operations forces to cross the border. While regretting the daily loss of life in Iraq, he noted that sometimes sacrifices were necessary to achieve difficult objectives. He assessed that the process in Iraq was moving forward, albeit slowly.

¶14. (C) Ozkok underscored the importance of Kirkuk as a symbol of all of Iraq, urging that any referendum on its status involve all Iraqis. Similarly, Iraq's natural resources should be used for the benefit of all Iraqis.

¶15. (C) Gen Pace expressed appreciation for Turkey's contributions in Iraq and reviewed recent progress in developing the Iraqi Army, both in size and ability. Terrorists understand that Iraq is now the "center of gravity" of the GWOT, which is why the US is determined to provide sufficient security for the Iraq to get on its feet, support the Iraqis' forming an inclusive, unifying government, and to stop the terrorists by not only capturing and killing them but also building the economy and infrastructure to reduce unemployment and the temptation to take up arms. Walking away from Iraq would only encourage the terrorists. He cautioned, however, that the war on terrorism would be a long one. Ozkok recalled news reports earlier in the day of Senate Armed Services Committee members saying that the US is a great country and would solve the problems in Iraq. (CODEL Warner had meetings in Ankara earlier the same day, reftels.) "Your success is our security," the general said.

¶16. (C) Ozkok said that conflict between different groups in Iraq could lead to invitations for assistance from neighbors.

ANKARA 00001657 002 OF 003

Turkey, Iran, Syria and Israel all have security interests in Iraq. It would be far better to cooperate for the benefit of Iraq. That is why TGS supports assisting the US.

PKK

¶17. (C) Ozkok said he understood why the US has not taken on the PKK in northern Iraq. He expressed appreciation for US-Turkish intelligence exchanges and especially for US efforts against these terrorists in Europe. Nonetheless, more needed to be done in Iraq. He said the PKK operates its logistic support and training activities in Iraq without fear, picking up new techniques and equipment which they test out in attacks in Turkey. The mountainous border is impossible to protect without assistance on the other side, and there is none. He hoped the US would do something to avoid giving the PKK the impression that we view it as a friend. Strong statements by senior officials would help.

¶18. (C) CJCS responded that the PKK is a terrorist organization and is, therefore, unacceptable to the US in Iraq, Turkey or elsewhere. He reviewed some specific steps the US has taken against the organization) dedicating over 20 analysts at JAC Molesworth to the PKK, working against PKK finances and criminal activity in Europe, and working to locate PKK leaders in Iraq. Attacking the PKK would be equivalent to opening another front in the war. Instead, our priority should be on the stability and governance of Iraq first, then Turkey, Iraq and the US could deal with the PKK presence. That said, he understood Ozkok's point about keeping the PKK on edge, and undertook to examine what might be done in that regard when he returned to Washington.

¶19. (C) Regarding the situation in Turkey, Ozkok observed that some people talk of a "Kurdish problem." (Note: PM Erdogan caused a stir last year when he used this term in public remarks in Diyarbakir. End note.) "There isn't one," according to Ozkok. Instead, the problem in Turkey's southeast are due to geography. "Even Kurdish businessmen

invest in the West," he observed. If Turkey's per capita income were \$10,000 instead of \$4,000, no one would desire a Kurdish state.

Iran

¶10. (C) Ozkok declared Iran's effort to acquire nuclear weapons concerned Turkey, and that Ankara was bothered that the "proliferation axis" from North Korea through China, India and Pakistan was reaching Turkey's borders. He called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from "the area." TGS has only minimal relations with the Iranian military. He suggested that convincing China and Russia that a nuclear-armed Iran would be a threat would be useful. Nonetheless, he also argued that isolating Iran would be counterproductive, spurring Tehran to drive for self-sufficiency. Dialogue would be more likely to succeed. Gen Pace responded that there was a great deal more diplomacy likely to occur before this issue is resolved.

Other Issues

¶11. (C) Other issues the two generals discussed were:

-- Exercises/Training: Ozkok and Pace agreed that we should informally preview requests for training or exercises in Turkey so we could consider Turkish constraints in our formal requests and avoid putting TGS in the awkward position of turning us down. Gen Pace added that, as US troop commitments to OIF and OEF diminish over the next year or so, we should review our bilateral exercise schedule to resume activities suspended because we lacked available forces to participate. He pledged to do what he could to break down barriers to working and training together.

-- Aegean: Ozkok complained about Greeks' intercepting TUAF flights, Athens' refusal to approve NATO exercises in the

ANKARA 00001657 003 OF 003

Aegean, and the GOG's issuing year-long NOTAMs blocking large areas of international air and sea space from other militaries' use. He said Turkey did not want to provoke Greece, and stated that keeping international airspace and seas from shrinking was in the interest of the US as well.

-- Defense industry: Gen Pace raised the difficulty American defense firms were having participating in Turkish tenders. Noting that he wasn't a salesman, he argued that the exclusion of American equipment would erode opportunities for our militaries to work together at lower levels (mechanics, operators, etc.). Ozkok pushed back noting that Turkish industry was now more developed and capable; thus, Turkey requires offsets. Some technology transfer restrictions also cause problems for Turkey, he said. For example, his preference was for American helicopters, but anyone could tamper with the software code making a system inoperable; that was why Turkey wanted to develop its own mission computers. Ozkok also expressed concern that American firms could not say up front whether they will be permitted to deliver systems they are bidding to provide. Nevertheless, he thought all these issues could be solved if the two sides came together to do so. Gen Pace said he would look at US restrictions once he returned to Washington, but asked Ozkok to also work to find a solution.

--Kosovo: "Kosovo is a crucial issue that will impact on the entire region," according to Ozkok. "Everyone should be careful."

-- Syria: General Pace asked for Ozkok's advice in dealing with Syria. The CHOD replied that Asad is young and looks to the future, but is isolated in a system occupied by many hard-liners. He thought "good psyops" directed at the people coupled with support for the president could change the

country's direction.

¶12. (U) CJCS cleared this message.

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